

April 4, 2006
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Ken Johnson and members Dan Wakley, Jeff Marker, and Robert Turpin. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield), and Marine Extension Agent (Christina Verlinde). Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Marker moved approval of the minutes from the March 7, 2006 meeting; Wakley seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (4-0)

Review Artificial Reef Proposal

Walker said one proposal was received from Walter Marine. Turpin reviewed the new design of the modular unit and discussed several problems that existed with the previous design. He said he has no experience with this modular design and discussed his concerns. There was further discussion regarding whether rock rubble is included in the Walter Marine proposal. Turpin said he talked to John Dodrill with the State of Florida and asked if FWC (Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) will modify the terms of the contract to allow the modular unit without rock rubble. Turpin said Dodrill felt FWC will be amiable to modifying the terms if only one proposal is received. There was further discussion regarding the expense of adding rock rubble and Walter Marine's proposal.

Marker moved approval of the Walter Marine proposal for two reef groups with a condition that the proposal be approved by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; Wakley seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (4-0)

Johnson said he has concerns with the attachment points of the modular panels. He requested county staff provide Walter Marine with a contact address so Walter Marine can provide video updates of the artificial reef structures. Turpin said the units are not constructed yet, and Walter Marine may be agreeable to making more than one type of design. He said the contract should include four monitoring events.

Discussion of FY06-07 Florida Boating Improvement Program Grant Application

Walker distributed last year's FBIP (Florida Boating Improvement Program) application (Attachment in file). Verlinde said the grant will provide channel markers to Navarre Beach boat ramp and amenities such as tables, gazebos, and benches in the immediate area. She said the FBIP application deadline is June 2, 2006.

Turpin said FBIP is fairly strict with the criteria. He suggested contacting FWC for assistance with the application. Wakley said picnic tables are specifically not allowed. He 2 recommended changing the wording from picnic areas to waiting areas, standby facilities, or resting areas. Wakley discussed the point system FBIP will use to award the grant. Johnson asked Wakley and Turpin to supply Verlinde with data regarding the FBIP grant application. He said the application can be voted on at the next meeting.

Discussion of Waterways Planning Workshop

Verlinde said the Waterway Management System Workshop is scheduled on Tuesday, June 6, 2006 at 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. She said the first workshop will be an introduction on the Waterway Management System. Verlinde said a more in depth planning workshop can be scheduled sometime in September. She requested the committee members check their calendars and email her with a date in September to schedule the second workshop.

Other Business/Adjournment

Turpin said there is a lot of interest in allowing the use of some portion of the existing Interstate 10 Bridge (that is under contract for demolition) as a fishing bridge. He said a number of steps will have to be accomplished to allow this action. Turpin named several hurdles and said he is committed to making a motion concerning the fishing pier to go before the Board of County Commissioners for consideration.

Yale Coleman with the Pensacola Speckled Trout Club spoke in favor of using a portion of the damaged Interstate 10 Bridge as a fishing pier. He said the Pensacola fishing bridge is no longer there, and Escambia County has no plans to reconstruct it.

Earl Rader said he is representing the Pensacola Recreational Fishermen's Association. He said the Pensacola fishing bridge was a wonderful draw for the fisherman that could not afford to fish from boats. Rader said his organization supports the fishing bridge, and he encouraged the committee to do whatever they can do to save fishing sites.

Bill Coursen said anything to enhance fishing in Escambia County or Santa Rosa County should be done. He said he felt Santa Rosa County should obtain possession of the bridge to enhance the area economically.

Christopher Gay said this is a regional opportunity for the county to attract people from all around. He discussed the precedence of using a federal highway as a fishing bridge and the economic implications. Gay requested the Marine Advisory Committee and the Board of County Commissioners get on board with this project and any other area fishing opportunities.

Turpin discussed FWC data regarding the value of a fishing pier on the local economy. Walker said the TPO (Transportation Planning Organization), the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners, and the Santa Rosa County Board of County

Commissioners have already addressed using a portion of the bridge as a fishing pier. He said the Interstate 10 Bridge is owned by the Federal Highway Administration and the 3 project is to far down the road. Walker discussed several of the issues associated with changing the Interstate 10 Bridge contract at this time.

Marker said he is willing to support anything that is possible to enhance fishing. He said this committee is very supportive of increasing fishing piers and access to waterways for public use. There was discussion regarding Escambia County's fishing pier and some type of fishing structure to replace the damaged fishing pier.

Turpin moved approval for (1) the Marine Advisory Committee to investigate the potential of a portion of the Interstate 10 Bridge being used as a fishing pier, and (2) investigate all bridge projects with a policy regarding reutilization of these structures for fishing bridges and allowance for some type of fishing access through an accessory lane or structure during the construction of all new bridge projects; Marker seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (4-0).

Turpin asked that any clean concrete from county road or bridge demolition projects be considered for offshore deployment as artificial reefs or deployed at inshore sites for oyster restoration projects.

Wakley said there are eight confirmed derelict vessels in the area of the Navarre Beach boat ramp. He asked the process to get rid of these vessels. Turpin said the Legislature is looking at House Bill 71.75 that will rewrite the criteria to declare a vessel derelict and fund the cost of removal at the state level. Wakley said there is an immediate need to have these vessels removed because they are creating a threat to property and water safety. Turpin reviewed the process to have a vessel declared derelict.

Wakley moved approval for county staff to take the appropriate action to have the derelict vessels in the vicinity of the Navarre Beach boat ramp removed; Marker seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (4-0).

Turpin suggested contacting a marine salvage company to negotiate a package estimate and work out the logistics of removing the derelict vessels from the water.

Wakley said there is a shortage of signage at the boat ramps. He said the East River boat ramp has no signage regarding parking areas. Wakley said signage is also needed at the Navarre Beach boat ramp. There was continued discussion regarding a large pile of rock at the East River boat ramp. Whitfield said he will check into the signage and rock. There was further discussion regarding additional signage at all county boat ramps.

Marker asked the status of the proposal for a New Marine Resource Manager position. Walker said he forwarded the information to the Human Resource Director.

Verlinde gave a brief update on the oyster restoration project and discussed the public relations of the project.

Turpin congratulated Verlinde on a very successful Seagrass Awareness Day on the 25th of March at Shoreline Park in Gulf Breeze. He asked the planned activities for Earth Day in Santa Rosa County. Verlinde said the Blackwater River Heritage Trail is having an Earth Day event, the Santa Rosa Clean Community System is having a Santa Rosa County Clean Up Day, and the Gulf Breeze Zoo is having a Earth Day celebration. Turpin said on Saturday, May 6 th a Ft. Pickens Beach Clean Up is scheduled for boaters. He said citizens can pre-register by contacting Beckie Mims, Park Ranger with Gulf Islands National Seashore, at 934-2631.

Johnson thanked the public for attending tonight's meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Marine Advisory Committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.